



OSS Work Group Meeting

Tuesday, March 22, 2016, 1:30PM to 4:00PM

Environmental Health Services, 14350 SE Eastgate Way, Bellevue, WA 98007

Welcome and Introductions (Darrell Rodgers, PH-EHSD Section Manager)

Darrell welcomed Work Group members and other attendees to the meeting and provided a brief introduction about the On-Site Sewage Program. He thanked attendees for agreeing to help address OSS Program problems and to work on recommendations to help the program provide good customer service and the highest level of public health and environmental protection possible.

Work Group Meeting Housekeeping (Jay Watson, facilitator)

Jay Watson introduced himself and gave a brief description of his background. He then went over the introductory materials for this series of meetings. Those documents included the:

- ▶ Ground rules for the meetings;
- ▶ Goals of the meetings and the roles of the principal participants;
- ▶ Meeting dates, times and location;
- ▶ Potential meeting topics; and
- ▶ Information sources for the meetings.

Work Group Member Comments and Questions:

Q: When Work Group recommendations are requested, how will disagreements be reflected if there is not unanimity of opinion?

A: This process was conceived as consensus seeking with regard to any recommendations that might be made. If there are disagreements about recommendations, those disagreements will be recorded as a part of the recommendation, as well as a note about the proportion of the group that took those opposing views, to the extent that it is relevant. If there is no consensus on a position, then that lack of consensus will be recorded as such.

Q: Is this process related to King County's Comprehensive Planning processes?

A: No, it is separate from land use planning.

Q: Concerns were expressed about the composition of the King County Board of Health.

A: This Work Group has no authority to change the composition of the King County Board of Health, which is established in state law.

Q: It was pointed out that there are a variety of sources of water pollution besides OSS; how much of overall water pollution throughout King County might be from OSS?

A: Our next meeting in April, and possibly additional meetings, will directly address water pollution and how OSS contributes to it.

Q: There were no meeting topics proposed for the September and October meeting dates, what will those meetings cover.

A: The September and October meeting dates were proposed in case they are needed. If the Work Group finishes its work in 6 meeting sessions those extra 2 meetings may not be needed.

Legal Requirements and Roles (Lynn Schneider, PH-EHSD OSS Program Staff)

Lynn provided a brief overview of the legal requirements for OSS programs and some of the challenges of meeting those requirements. State law required OSS Management Plans be developed for each of the twelve Puget Sound counties by 2007. That is when King County completed its first plan. We are undertaking an update to that plan because several circumstances have changed since that plan was written.

Staff see the value of a management plan because it can help set priorities for action – what areas need to have more attention, how much emphasis to place on education versus enforcement, how to assess OSS owner needs and attempt to satisfy them, and how to allocate the program’s limited resources to achieve the highest level of compliance to ensure public health and environmental protection. The goal is to achieve a workable plan that can be turned into action so that staff can be responsive to what is needed.

Work Group Member Comments and Questions:

Q: Questions were asked about the County’s ability to oversee new types of systems that are being installed (new advanced technology that is being applied to lots that were previously undevelopable) and what that might mean for the owners of conventional systems, who have the majority of systems.

A: Staff are currently stretched thin and will be challenged even more in the future coping with these new types of systems – it probably means even slower overall service if staffing levels remain at the same levels. But staff are aware that they have to provide equal levels of service for all OSS owners.

Q: The point was made that OSS owners fear interactions with County regulators because they are concerned that those interactions will mean increased costs to them.

A: Staff understand this and will discuss education and outreach efforts with the Work Group as one of the options to ensure proper operation and maintenance (O&M) as well as compliance with OSS O&M regulations.

Q: Questions were raised about past funding levels and sources and why the County’s OSS Program is in such dire financial circumstances.

A: Staff went over the history of OSS Program funding including the reduction of the car tab fee. That fee was a major source of program funding in the past and required staff

and program cuts when it was eliminated. At that time the King County Council directed that Environmental Health Programs should be funded on a fee-for-service basis and not rely on taxes.

Q: A request was made for Lynn's PowerPoint presentation.

A: That presentation will be posted on the OSS website as well as printed for inclusion in Work Group member's binders.

Q: A request was made for copies of the presentation maps.

A: Staff will have to look into how to make map information available because the maps are so large that smaller copies will be unreadable and much of the information will be lost with the smaller size.

Q: A request was made to have a map that shows agricultural impacts (CAFOs, dairy farms and manure lagoons, etc.).

A: Staff will see if that information is available and can be depicted on a map.

Q: Questions were asked about the definition of pollution, the various causes of it and the causes in specific areas.

A: Staff hope to have much of our next meeting and the one following that, directly addressing these questions of pollution types, sources, how it is measured and monitored and who does that work.

Q: A comment was made about the Green/Duwamish and how parts were polluted and how other parts were pristine.

A: That is the case with many areas in the County – there are hot spots and areas that retain good water quality. Staff will need help in figuring out how to prioritize amongst putting all its efforts in responding to complaints/hot spots, trying to maintain currently good water quality with preventative measures (education and outreach about good O&M) or what mix of approaches to use/where to put their efforts.

Q: A question was asked about contamination of drinking water wells and about the susceptibility of shallow wells.

A: Contamination of wells varies not just by the depth of the well but by the composition of the substrate

Q: A question was raised about the effectiveness of sand filters.

A: Sand filter effectiveness was discussed and it was noted that the success of various treatment types depends on the characteristics of the site where they are installed.

OSS Basics (Terry Hull, OSS Consultant)
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Terry Hull provided a presentation about OSS basics including what an OSS is, how they work, their normal design lifespan ranges. He discussed how OSS should be operated and maintained. He also went over the different types of pollution that can be generated from improperly operated and maintained OSS.

Work Group Member Comments and Questions:

Q: There were questions about what types of diseases (viruses and bacteria) could be transmitted in polluted water from OSS.

A: Terry discussed some of the varieties of pathogens, including the polio virus.

Q: Requests were made for Terry's presentation.

A: It will be posted on the OSS webpage as well as printed for Work Group members to include in their binders.

King County OSS Program Status and Challenges (Lynn Schneider and Terri Jenkins-McLean, PH-EHSD OSS Program Staff)

Terri and Lynn described the OSS program's challenges and their focus on customer service and achieving compliance in the most efficient manner possible. They reviewed the progress and shortcomings in implementing the 2007 OSS Management Plan, the challenges and experience of addressing failing systems in the Marine Recover Area on Vashon Island, and experiences and general issues and challenges in attempting to address OSS throughout King County.

Work Group Member Comments and Questions:

Q: How are failing OSS addressed when the homeowner does not have funding to fix the problem.

A: Craft³, a non-profit lending institution, can offer loans to homeowners that meet low income thresholds that don't need to be repaid until the property is sold or transferred, so PH has been trying to link homeowners with them to get that economic barrier removed. The Cract³ program is currently offered to residents in high priority areas of Vashon Island. We anticipate a county-wide OSS repair, replacement, or hook-up to sewer loan program, with verifying repayment and interest rate options dependent on income, to be available late this summer!

Q: Can demographic and economic data be presented about OSS owners throughout the County so the Work Group can have more of a context to consider social justice issues?

Q: Questions were raised about the problems on Vashon Island (in the Marine Recovery Area/MRA) and how long they have been gone on.

A: Staff will talk more about MRA issues when the Work Group discusses future prioritization of the program's work.

Program Financing Update (Darrell Rodgers)

Darrell reviewed the program's financial history, and budgetary and resource constraints. He explained that while the programs finances are currently in flux, the Work Group should focus its attention on identifying critical concerns and helping

prioritize work efforts, regardless of how this work is resourced. He said that the Work Group would be updated on the program's finances as that picture changes.

Public Comments

A comment was made about the lack of general understanding about the state of OSS throughout the County – that things are more problematic than is generally understood.

Another comment was made that there are areas in the County where systems are aging, the population is aging, and sewers will not be extended in the foreseeable future. Staff noted that this is a social justice issue for low income/fixed income residents and that a part of the problem is the lack of staffing to help address that problem with additional grant development as well as loan coordination.

A comment was made that research should be undertaken to see how other counties address these problems and how they finance their operations and they other counties seemed to have solved these issues. Staff said that every county was slightly different and that no county in the state has the problem adequately addressed – and that sufficient funding is always an issue. A recent research report on OSS management by Puget Sound Counties has been completed by the WA Dept. of Health. It is entitled *Puget Sound Septic System Management Programs Reference Manual* and will be posted to the Public Health OSS webpage for Work Group Members' use.

A question was raised about the composition of the Board of Health and why Seattle is involved. Staff explained that in the past, there were two departments of health (Seattle and King County, which merged in 1951 under King County. Seattle and King County Boards of Health continued to exist separately until the State Legislature passed legislation in 1995 authorizing city and county boards of health to merge. Seattle, King County and the other cities in King County agreed upon one board of health for all of King County and merged soon after.

A question was asked about current permit timelines. Staff responded that different permits took different amounts of time, but that all the timelines were too long and that a lack of staff was a problem for adequate customer service.

Meeting Recap (Jay Watson)

Jay told the Work Group that if they had any questions about the materials that were presented, they should call or e-mail him with those questions. He said that all meeting related materials would be posted on the OSS Plan Update webpage at: <http://www.kingcounty.gov/healthservices/health/ehs/wastewater/2016-oss-plan-update.aspx>, as well as printed and provided to each Work Group member, for inclusion in their binders, at subsequent meetings. He also said that if Work Group members had ideas for additional presentation topics, they should contact him with those suggestions.

Meeting Attendees

Work Group Members:

- David Crowell, Seattle-King Realtors Assn.
- Robert Elwell, City of Auburn
- Deidre Finley, Black Diamond Gardens
- Mary Jane Goss, Seattle-King Realtors Assn.
- Barri Herman, Resident
- Warren Iverson, Greater Maple Valley Unincorporated Area Council
- Gwendolyn High, Community Alliance to Reach out and Engage
- Cristofer Horbelt, Seattle Public Utilities
- Dave Hudson, Columbia Land Services
- Tanya McFarlane , City of Redmond
- Doug Navetski, King County DNRP-WLRD Stormwater
- Jean Pearson, Green Valley/Lake Holm Assoc.
- Trudy Rolla, Northshore Utility District
- George Streepy, G&N Septic Tank Service
- Valerie Streeter, Tulalip Tribes
- Ralph Svrjcek, WA Dept. of Ecology
- Dave Winfrey, Puyallup Tribe
- Jordan Zier , BHC Consulting

Staff & Contractors:

- Darrell Rodgers, PH-EHSD Section Manager
- Lynn Schneider, PH-EHSD, OSS Program
- Terri Jenkins-Mclean, PH-EHSD, OSS Program
- Doug Jones, PH-EHSD, OSS Program
- Jay Watson, EPM, LLC, Contract Facilitator
- Natasha Walker, Kellogg Consulting, Inc., Contract Meeting Recorder
- Terry Hull, OSS Consultant

Audience Members and Other Attendees:

- Todd Dale, Aqua Test
- Andrew Gunia, A Advanced Septic and Construction Services
- JR Inman, NW Cascade, Inc.
- Matt Lee, Aqua Test
- Craig Pearson, Green Valley/Lake Holm Assoc.
- John Thomas, WA On-Site Sewage Assoc.